

LESSON NOTES

# All About #5

## Top 5 Phrases in Cantonese

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# GRAMMAR

## The Focus of This Lesson is Five Must-Know Cantonese Phrases

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Following are five essential phrases (and one bonus phrase) guaranteed to be absolutely must-know phrases you'll use in Cantonese.

### #1 Must-Know Phrase: 唔該, *m4 goi1* ("Thanks")

The Cantonese aren't big on "please," but they love "thank you" so much that they'll often hit you with a barrage of thanks all at once: *m4goi1 m4goi1 m4goi1 m4goi1...* True, sometimes they will say this as a way to get rid of you, sometimes it's genuine thanks, and sometimes you'll hear this because they don't know what exactly you're talking about. But nonetheless, this is the universal word that means gratitude. We'll leave interpreting its exact meaning to you to interpret.

### #2 Must-Know Phrase: 聽唔明, *teng1 m4 ming4* ("I don't understand what you are saying.")

This phrase is going to be your best friend, go-to, and solace. When your conversation partner follows you perfectly accented *neihou* with a barrage of Cantonese at lightning speed, this phrase will instantly replace any looks of irritation or impatience with something else: ill-concealed laughter, bewilderment, compassion and perhaps an immediate switch to the language that transcends all national, political, and cultural boundaries: charades.

### #3 Must-Know Phrase: 你好 *nei5 hou2* ("Hello")

If you don't know it yet, we don't know where you've been. But we would be remiss if we didn't teach you "hello." *Neihou* literally means "you good." Not a bad way to greet someone.

### #4 Must-Know Phrase: 唔知, *m4 zi1* ("I don't know.")

You may hear this phrase more than use it, however, learn from the Cantonese how to *m4zi1* every situation you wish to evade, play dumb about, or avoid.

### #5 Must-Know Phrase: 對唔住, *deoi3 m4 zyu6* ("Sorry.")

You're likely going to need to apologize a lot. In fact, you can just throw this word out at

random, just to be on the safe side of etiquette. You can use *deoi3 m4 zyu6* to apologize to anyone you step on in the Hong Kong subway, to apologize for any cultural faux pas you've likely committed, or to just curry favor in general.

**Bonus Must-Know Phrase:** 我愛你, *ngo5 oi3 nei5* ("I love you.")

You're going to love this phrase. But use it with caution.